# Ambiguities of the Flesh. Touch and Arousal in Roman Baroque Sculpture

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# AMBIGUITIES OF THE FLESH

Touch and Arousal in Italian Baroque Sculpture

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## Marble Made Flesh

In his *Carta del navegar pittoresco*, the Venetian painter and writer Marco Boschini gives lavish praise to the sculptures of Alessandro Algardi, arguing that »these are statues made of flesh, and not of marble or if they are marble, it is made flesh«.[1] Made flesh – *incarnada* is the term he uses – hints here at Christ's incarnation (»the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us«).[2] Boschini's praise, then, not only implies the life of Algardi's figures, but also their physical, tangible presence. Indeed, it has been particularly the tangible nature of the resurrected Christ, that has played such an important role in the Christian tradition. For Saint Augustine, to name a particularly striking example, the truth of Christ's incarnation is intrinsically bound up with the sense of touch: »It was true flesh«, he writes, »that Truth brought back to life; true flesh that Truth showed to the disciples after the resurrection; the scars of true flesh that Truth presented to the hands of those who would touch him.«[3] Read in this context, Boschini's terminology implies a moment of magical transformation. Stone becomes true flesh under the sculptor's chisel, a flesh that is available »to the hands of those who would touch.«

Although we can downplay Boschini's statement, and such statements in general, as belonging to the literary conventions of praise, here I will argue that particularly because of this conventional character it deserves our attention. As Sebastian Schütze, among others, has pointed out, such ekphrastic conventions »have structured the early modern eye with

an astonishing normative power and persistence«.[4] The beholder's gaze was conditioned by a discourse replete with such conventions, inciting a very real sensitivity to the flesh-like and tactile qualities of contemporary sculpture. This paper will explore some of the aspects of this discourse and relate them to the kinds of responses the image may elicit, trying to elaborate further on the interaction between beholder and object by introducing some more recent ideas from philosophy and psychology.[5] A justification for such a seemingly anachronistic approach may be found in the changing approach to art in the seventeenth century itself, where the artist's inquiry into the facts of nature had become secondary to the rhetorical means of his art; that is to say, art was first and foremost conceived to elicit a response in the beholder.[6]

Sculpture stands out here as an art that is particularly prone to responses involving the sense of touch; whereas the lively figures of the painter are always over there, part of a different world on the other side of the picture plane, the sculpted figure is present, tangible, and shares the space of the beholder.[7] Moreover, I will argue that the vivaciousness of sculpted flesh is inherently ambiguous in the way it moves the beholder, an ambiguity that has everything to do with the complicated nature of our sense of touch.

## An Extraordinary Sense

So what is so special about the sense of touch? The French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty writes:

> »When I touch my right hand with my left, my right hand, as an object, has the strange property of being able to feel too. [...] When I press my two hands together, it is not a matter of two sensations felt together as one perceives two objects placed side by side, but of an ambigious set-up in which both hands can alternate the roles of ›touching‹ and being ›touched‹.«[8]

To touch something, is also to be touched by it, touch is »reversible«. If my hands are touching, I unite »to touch« and »to be touched« in myself. Even if they are not the same, the feeling of touching something and to be touched by something are markedly different: I cannot, in this case, have one without the other. If I touch the hand of another person, say, when shaking hands, this continuum is interrupted: I touch, am being touched, but cannot now feel how it is to touch me or how it is to be touched by me. This interruption is not absolute, though; there is, as Merleau-Ponty argues, »a carnal adherence of the sentient to the sensed and of the sensed to the sentient«.[9] It is this adherence that comprises our opening onto the world. If I strike out at someone, or reach out to touch, I anticipate in my movement the touch of the flesh both as it will feel and as it will be felt. And as the other person does the same, we mirror each other, one steps into the other's flesh, and vice versa.

We may further elaborate on this intricate relationship between touch and flesh by looking at what may be deemed the archetypical story of living sculpture: that of Pygmalion and Galathea. The story is well-known. Pygmalion, having been put off by the »imprudent acts« of women, or so recounts Ovid, sculpts himself the perfect virgin wife – and falls in love with her. He prays to Venus, in the hope she will grant him a wife that is like his statue and she grants his wishes by giving life to the image itself. In the end, the story does not have the happy ending one might have expected. What interests me here, though, is the description Ovid gives (I will cite from a seventeenth-century Italian translation) of the first encounters between the sculptor and his creation, encounters where the sense of touch plays a central role: »While she seemed alive to him, he stretched out his hand, and wanted to experience it [this life] with his finger, and as if she had feelings, he touched [her] very gently, for he did not want to bruise the flesh. And even if now it did not seem a human body to him, he did not, however, want to judge it for certain.«[10]

Thus, the sculptor, ever so gently, tests his illusion (»she seemed alive to him«) with his hands, and even if he does not want to admit that it is not real flesh, his touch tells him otherwise. And again, when after Venus's intervention the sculpture slowly undergoes the magical transformation from sculpted flesh to real life:

> »[Pygmalion] kisses the beloved mouth, and touches her bosom, and she seems to feel somewhat tepid to him. He tries again, and to his delight her surface feels softer, and more flesh-like, and while he still cannot really believe it, he feels the beating in her chest heightening the pulse. As if someone moulds hard wax, making it softer and warmer with his fingers, in order to give it any kind of shape, it becomes more and more tractable and less firm. Thus handling her, the statue changes its nature, and becomes softer and warmer, and, in his amazement, he tries and tries so much, that finally he discerns and finds her alive.«[11]

The same hand that, before the godly intervention, brought on disappointment now finds affirmation. The hand, in both instances, mediates between what is seen and what is known; it seeks to affirm. The sculptor touches her, almost moulds her as if modelling wax, trying again and again. It is the hand that convinces in the end – the hand that feels the softness and warmth of flesh, inaccessible to the eye: »corpus erat!«, exclaims Ovid, »it was real flesh!«[12] Before the statue speaks, even breathes, touch discerns life through the warm, soft flesh. Flesh, then, is where life makes itself first known; sculpted flesh is sculpted life.

## Touching Sculpture

As today, so also in the seventeenth century the Pygmalian touch was not the most obvious way to approach sculpture. Sculpture, or at least sculpture of artistic merit was generally not to be touched. In fact, Pope Urban VIII, who held office from 1623 to 1644, strongly

regulated which statues could and could not be touched. The touch that was allowed was of a purely ritual kind, as in the case of the old bronze statue of St. Peter's, which nowadays still is often subjected to the public's feeling fingers, though maybe more as part of a ritual that is rather touristy in character |fig. 1|.

Stories are known of people touching collectors' items as well. The British grand tourist John Evelyn recalls in his travel diary how Ippolito Vitelleschi, a Roman art collector, »had one of the best collections of statues in Rome; to which he frequently talkes & discourses, as if they were living, pronouncing now & then Orations, Sentences, & Verses, sometime kissing & embracing them«.[13] Evelyn describes it as an oddity, though, »as pleasant as a Comedy«, and we may certainly expect this kind of behaviour to be the exception.[14] Indeed, Cardinal Mazarin is quoted to have warned a visitor who apparently came too close while inspecting his antiquities with what is obviously an understatement: »Sir, I must point out that these statues break when they fall [...].«[15]

In any case, the idea that sculpture would appeal more to the touch than to the eye should not be taken too literally. In the context of the so-called *paragone* debate – that is to say, the debate about which is the better art, painting or sculpture – that engaged intellectuals and artists alike in sixteenth-century Florence, the sculptor Niccolò Tribolo had still stated that if a blind man happened to come upon a marble or wood or clay figure, he would think it was a real man, woman or child.[16] Moreover, he argued that sculpture is more truthful than painting because of its physical, tactile qualities. Yet, several decades later, the scientist Galileo Galilei would rightly do away with this idea, arguing that neither painting nor sculpture can deceive the sense of touch: »Now who would believe«, he asks rhetorically, »that a man, when touching a statue, would think that it is a living human being?« He continues: »Certainly nobody«, because »not only the projections and depressions (which constitute the relief in a statue) come within the province of this sense [of touch] but also softness and hardness, warmth and coolness, smoothness and roughness, heaviness and lightness, all of which criteria of the statue's power to deceive.«[17] The statue, then, Galileo implicitly admits, to the eye may indeed seem »a living human being«; that which proves hard and cold to the touch may seem to have the softness and warmth of life to the eyes.

The tension between what is seen and what is touched was already apparent in the Pygmalion story. The statue seemed alive, but in the end only touch could really convince the sculptor. The striking thing, though, is that things may seem hard or soft or even warm to the eyes at all. For indeed, are these not qualities that are confined to the sense of touch? What underlies this apparent contradiction is a traditional division between the senses that is much too rigid. Whereas touch may indeed break the spell of the seemingly living flesh – »only the hand discloses the deceits«, one seventeenth-century poet writes – this does not mean that the sense of touch is not involved when marble is perceived as flesh.[18] In fact the perceptual domains of sight and touch largely overlap and are in a way complementary. Whatever I see only has meaning to me as part of a physical, tangible world, whatever I touch only has meaning as something that can be made visible.

1 Arnolfo di Cambio: *Saint Peter*, c. 1290–1295, bronze, h. 1,82 m, Vatican City, St. Peter's Basilica

As much was realized also in the seventeenth century, where sensory modalities could overlap much more easily than today. The Jesuit Sforza Pallavicino, a good friend of Bernini, writes that the sight of a red rose, even if it is well out of reach, may awaken the memories of its sweet fragrance.[19] Thus, through one sense, another is stimulated. For the so-called »visual« arts, this insight is rather striking, for it means that the artist has access to all the senses.

## A Mother's Touch

To explore this matter further, we may return to the very origins of the reflective nature of flesh as discussed above. Among the most prominent experiences of touch and flesh that lie lingering in our memories, are without a doubt those of our earliest youth. The infant's world is fully determined by the mother's care-taking; even when mother and child are not actually touching, they are always within reach. Developmental psychologist Francine Wynn characterises this intricate relation as follows:

> »In the early phase of the newborn's life, a mother engages in a symphony of bodily gestures, movements, and perceptions that ›facilitate‹ and overlap with the reverberations and initiations of those movements, affects, and perceptions of her infant. This results in a circling interchange of rocking/being rocked, humming/cooing, feeling/being felt, touching/being touched, seeing/being seen, inspiration/expiration, exciting/calming etcetera, each echoing and mirroring the other.«[20]

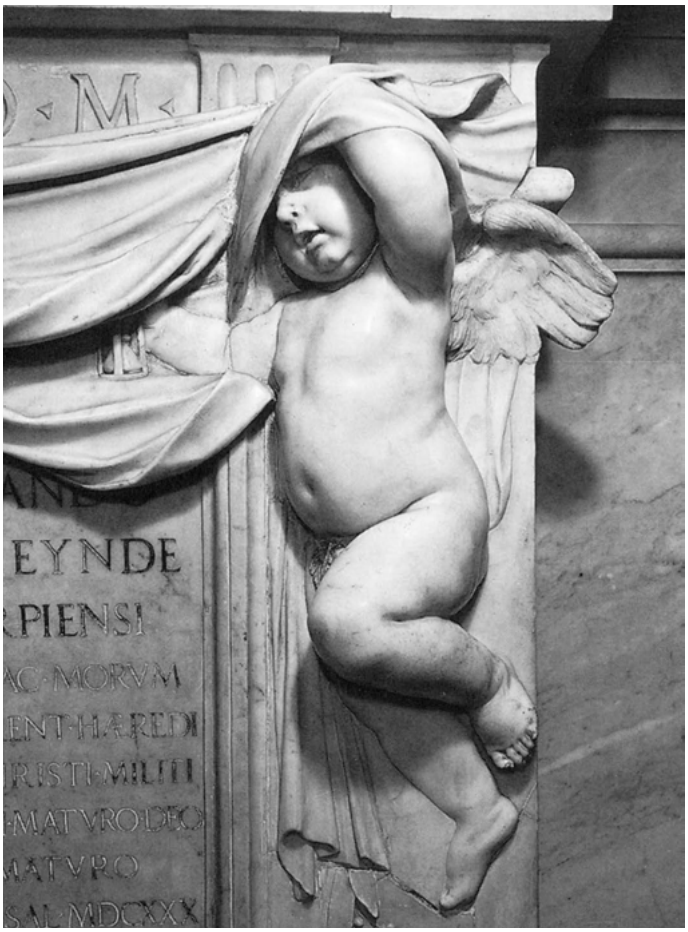
This relationship is deeply inscribed in our genetic makeup; as psychologist Donald Winnicott recognized, it is no use to speak of the infant at all without taking into account maternal care.

Bernini's voluptuous figure of *Charity* for the monument of Pope Urban VIII in St. Peter's has been credited with the evocative power to trigger such inborn behaviours |fig. 2|. Giovanni Andrea Borboni writes in 1661: »She moves all the mothers that see her, without even wanting it, to love tenderly [teneramente], and to embrace their children.«[21] And indeed, we may expect such a voluptuous mother figure, her breast (later covered up) »trembling with milk«, as the poet Giovan Battista Marino would express it, to be a save haven for the baby child.[22] The exchange between mother and child, then, is as a metaphor for charity; it is a metaphor, though, that we can actually feel through.

The theme of the mother-child relation recurs in descriptions of the sculpted child alone, most notably in the words of praise for the *putti* crafted by François Duquesnoy, who, according to his contemporaries, had perfected these figures by studying the works of Titian.[23] If we look at the *putti* that Duquesnoy sculpted for the tomb of the Flemish merchant Ferdinand van den Eynden in the Roman church of Santa Maria dell'Anima, it is indeed striking how tender and sweet they are. In comparison with the sturdy boys that Michelangelo had

2 Gian Lorenzo Bernini: *Charity*, 1646, marble, life-size, Vatican City, St. Peter's Basilica

sculpted some generations before, they do not only look younger, but indeed more cute, more soft. The *putto* on the right is arguably the more successful of the two |fig. 3|. With one arm he draws, as an act of mourning, a drapery before his eyes, but his face has remained partly vis-




3 François Duquesnoy: *Putto for the monument of Ferdinand van den Eynden*, 1635–1640, marble, h. 0,85 m, Rome, Santa Maria dell'Anima

ible. Between two round, somewhat sagging cheeks, stick out a slightly opened mouth with full, pursed lips, and a tiny round nose. The flesh on his arms is soft, undulating suggestively under the figure's movements. The round, full belly hangs under its own weight, pulling the skin tight over the full sides, though the ribs remain hidden under the flesh. Also the drawn-up leg makes the delicate body undulate softly; the feet are small, full, with ever so tiny toes.

Marco Boschini writes in praise of Titian's *putti* that they are so »vivaciously nurtured with the milk that seeped from his excellent brushes, that they are more than alive«.[24] The

life-giving milk that feeds the child – source of its chubby health – seeps from the brushes as the milky white of the painted flesh. About Duquesnoy's *putti* we read that they seem »softened into life«, »rather of animated flesh [...], than of hard stone«, or, according to yet another author, the sculptor »came to soften the hardness of the marble itself, making it seem to be of milk rather than hard stone«.[25] Thus, we find a conflation between the milk-white skin, echoed in the whiteness of the marble, and the soft flesh of the plump child fed on creamy mother's milk.

But what makes these *putti* by Duquesnoy in particular so special? Filippo Baldinucci argues, it was *tenerezza* that Duquesnoy sought after in his depiction of the *putto*, »searching out the most tender babies up until those still wrapped in swaddling clothes, observing minutely their tenderness, not only in their shape, but also in their actions, movements, and attitudes«.[26] We have seen already that Bernini's *Charity* spurred the mothers who saw her to love their children tenderly. Tenderness, then, implies a softness of the flesh, but also a softness of touch.

To further elaborate on this point, we may refer to the well-known study by the ethologist Konrad Lorenz, *Die angeborenen Formen möglicher Erfahrung* of 1943. In this study, Lorenz shows how certain physical traits in animals, but also in humans, may trigger certain inborn responses. One such behaviour is caretaking behaviour. Lorenz writes about his own daughter, who already at an early age cuddles her doll as if it was baby child – indeed, not unlike those nuns of early modern Italy who cuddled the images of baby Jesus with such a fervent passion that, as one account states, it »appeared to have become flesh, and warm«.[27] Now what are the qualities that trigger such responses? Konrad sums up all those characteristics that set Duquesnoy's *putti* apart from earlier examples: large eyes, a high forehead, but also short, plump arms and legs, and a soft, elastic body.[28] Rather than convincing babies – for their proportions are in reality quite monstrous – the artist has optimized his figures for effect: his *putti* are more tender than the most tender baby, an invitation to the most tender touch.[29]

## The Impudent Touch

And yet, not all sculpted flesh is so innocent and sweet. In his commentary on the Pygmalion story in the Italian translation quoted above, Gioseppe Horologgi notes that, because men are naturally tempted to love, »they give in to loving some things of little advantage, only for their very delight, such as paintings, sculptures, medals, and similar things, and they love them so ardently, that the very same things get to satisfy their desire« in a manner not unlike the satisfaction given by the love between a man and a woman.[30] Likewise, the aforementioned Sforza Pallavicino notes that painted figures may arouse the emotions, either for good or for bad, even if the beholder recognizes them to be painted. This is illustrated, he argues, by »the pestilent flames, that are lighted in the young hearts by

4 Unknown artist: *Medici Venus*, first century BC, marble, h. 1,53 m, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi

obscene images, for which with the shamefulness of human impudence at every possible hour much money is paid to be the doormen of the soothing lasciviousness: taking to be precious the very desire to sin«.[31]

The well-known story of the Venus of Cnidos – which stirred a young man to such a state of arousal that he locked himself in with the statue, leaving a rather dubious stain – is repeated again and again in seventeenth-century texts as the prime example of the dangerous attraction of the nude.[32] And indeed, some two millennia later, the work had not lost its lure, as one author deemed a famous copy, the Medici Venus |fig. 4|, »the most rare miracle that Greece

5 Guglielmo della Porta: *Justice*, 1575, marble, l. 2,20 m, Vatican City, St. Peter's Basilica

has sculpted in all its lasciviousness, in which Art with its softness shows itself so presumptuous in its want to teach Nature the ability to mould mankind among the stones, and to invent a new carnal sin in the amorous embrace of a stone«.[33]

That not only the works of antiquity could evoke such heated responses may be illustrated by the case of Guglielmo della Porta's figure of *Justice* |fig. 5|, on which, in again John Evelyn's words, »a pigmalian Spanyard [was] found in a lascivious posture«.[34] But one may wonder if such responses were confined strictly to non-religious works of art. Saint Bernard of Siena, when warning against the dangers of showing the human flesh in his *De inspirationibus*, ex-

plicitly included that of Christ: »I know of a person«, he writes, »who, while contemplating the humanity of Christ on the cross – it is shameful to say and horrendous just to imagine – sensually and foully polluted and defiled himself.«[35] In the beginning of the sixteenth century, Pietro da Lucca warned that particularly women »should be cautious when contemplating the nude flesh [nudità della carne] of the Saviour«, for they could be »easily led to some vile and ugly thoughts of carnality«.[36] Men, in their turn, should be wary of impure thoughts when contemplating the Virgin Mary or other female Saints. Obviously, such dangers were no different in the seventeenth century. Giovan Domenico Ottonelli still warns his readers that »one will be easily contaminated by impurity, who shows himself to be a less careful spectator of those ugly objects, that move so efficaciously towards sin«.[37] Indeed, even inside the church danger lurks, as too many artists imbue their figures with hints of lasciviousness: »Now come, o Phoebus«, one poet calls upon the ancient God, »and fix your gaze on those sacred temples, and contemplate there with me the coloured canvasses, the sculpted stone. Do they not seem Nymphs in a fountain or a cave, so much nudity, softness, and charm these Latin images have of the Greek?«[38]

## The Spiritual Touch

The sculptor's magical touch of transformation, then, was also a dangerous touch. Domenico Bernini writes about his father's sculpture of *Apollo and Daphne* that the group might offend the eye, not because it shows a young nude girl – for why would something of stone be offensive? – but particularly because this girl is sculpted by Bernini.[39] The artist operated in a context where there was a great deal of attention to such qualities, though, and this counts as much for the poetic as the religious discourse. With regard to the latter, we may note how the practice of contemplation appeals to the senses. In the popular *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius, for example, we read how one should bring to bear the »senses of the imagination« on that what is being contemplated – including Christ's Incarnation. In the *Breve instruttione* preceding the 1625 Italian edition of the *Exercises*, this application of the inner senses is prescribed as follows:

> »Start the application with the sense of sight, and imagine to behold [in the scene that is being contemplated] the persons, actions, and other things that can be the object of this sense; subsequently, apply the senses of hearing, taste, smell and touch, all to their proper objects […]. Yet, if one sense presents itself to the imagination before another, for example, first the sense of smell rather than that of sight and taste, focus on that one […] and try, as much as possible, to penetrate it well.«[40]

Ignatius thus makes a huge appeal on the imagination – an imagination that, in addition, is evidently multi-sensory. Obviously, this approach is devised in order to conjure up a

vivid, tangible presence of that which is contemplated in the imagination. As Carlo Gregorio Rosignoli, a Jesuit from Lombardy, relates in a commentary on the *Spiritual exercises*: »[…] from this mode of tasting or beholding the divine things […] one obtains some kind of experimental knowledge of them, which goes much further than the notions obtained by discourse, just as tasting flavours surpasses discussing them.«[41] To contemplate the flesh of Christ or saints – indeed a prominent feature in the Christian tradition, as also the words of Saint Augustine indicate – means to see, to touch and to smell it.

It is an approach that easily runs astray, or so we can read with yet another Jesuit preacher, one Francisco Arias:

> »The appetite for delight that is in the flesh, flows out as from a fountain and spreads itself over all the senses, as if over five rivers, and with the eyes, as if with some kind of bodyless hands it touches all that it wants, and the things that it cannot touch with the real hands it embraces with those very same eyes, and the images and figures of the things, that it receives through the eyes, are stamped in the heart and with them it inflames all of the body with delight, and in that guise all the senses operate towards delight, as if it were their queen, and thus they contaminate the soul, and make it carnal.«[42]

## Marble Touch

At this point it may well seem that all is in the eye of the beholder, that the temptations of the flesh are so strong that anything may fall prey to it. Yet the sculptor is very much able to further stimulate such responses. He can make the beholder aware of the tactile, flesh-like nature of his art, and as he takes part in the very same literary discourse, we may well expect him to do so. Moreover, ever since Annibale Carracci had stated that Raphael's paintings were »statuette-like« when compared with the soft *colorito* of Correggio, and Rubens had warned his colleague painters that, when they worked after statues, they should avoid giving their paintings the hard, stone-like quality of their examples, the sculptor had something to prove.[43] It was certainly a challenge sculptors such as Bernini and Duquesnoy responded to. In the case of Bernini, we may point at the unprecedented evocation of flesh in his *Rape of Proserpina* |fig. 6|. Where Pluto's strong fingers sink in the soft flesh of Proserpina's thigh and side, we feel the marble grow soft. As anthropologist Alfred Gell notes, »we see these depressions as instances, rather than representations, of causality«.[44] Rather than the result of the artist's chisel, we find that the flesh yields to the groping hands. It is such causality that heightens both the suggestion of flesh and our awareness of its tangible nature, as it responds to touch but also as it responds to the forces of gravity. Like the sculpted flesh seems to respond to the world as we know it, we feel it may respond to us.

A more subtle evocation of living flesh can be found in Bernini's *Angel with the Crown of Thorns*, originally made for the Ponte Sant'Angelo, but now in the Roman church of San

6 Gian Lorenzo Bernini: *Rape of Proserpina*, 1622, marble, h. 2,25 m, Rome, Galleria Borghese

7 Gian Lorenzo Bernini: *Angel with the Crown of Thorns*, 1669, marble, h. 2,70 m, Rome, Sant'Andrea delle Fratte

Andrea delle Fratte |fig. 7|. The figure's robe swirls up almost inappropriately high, exposing one of the slender, elongated legs to the beholder's eyes. In effect, the nude leg is not just nude, but is part of a play of veiling and unveiling; the fluttering draperies fly up, presenting the beholder, or so it seems, with a chance occurrence, a privileged moment of private con-

8 Gian Lorenzo Bernini: *The Blessed Lodovica Albertoni*, 1674, marble, l. 1,88 m Rome, San Francesco a Ripa

templation, while the angel apparently is caught unaware. What is more, the subtle folds tenderly stroke the naked leg, the inner thigh, thus heightening in the beholder the sense of the sensitivity of this soft, angelic flesh – flesh where there is supposed to be but ethereal being. But even in the fully clothed figure of the beatified Ludovica Albertoni, again by Bernini, our intuitions of her feelings are prompted by the flesh; under the heavy draperies of her gown, we feel there is a physical body, rippling with sensation echoed in the rippling of the draperies |fig. 8|. The ecstatic spasm that jerks at her body is felt by the hands that she presses to her breast; through the draperies, so the beholder knows, they clutch at flesh.

As I have argued, our relationship to flesh is central to our world from our very earliest experiences onwards. Accordingly, it may come as no surprise that the spiritual experience is often also an experience of the flesh. Saint Theresa wrote of the pain that accompanied her vision that it »is not bodily pain, but spiritual, though the body has a share in it – indeed, a great share«.[45] For the sculptor, and eventually for every artist, the illusion of flesh is a way to the flesh of the beholder. Engaging with an overtly present literary discourse, the artist works

his magic where it is experienced most conspicuously. Our capacity to mirror ourselves in others through the flesh that we share, gives us the capacity to feel with the work of art, a sympathetic feeling that, replete with ambiguities, makes sculpture, as if touched by magic, seem very much alive.

The research for this paper has been conducted in the context of the research project *Art, Agency and Living Presence in Early Modern Italy*, sited at Leiden University and generously funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). I would like to thank Maarten Delbeke and Caroline van Eck for their comments on the chapter of my PhD thesis on which this paper is based, as well as Julia Schmidt, Kimberley Skelton and the editors of this volume for their helpful comments and suggestions on this text; cf. Joris van Gastel: *Il marmo spirante. Sculpture and Experience in Seventeenth-Century Rome*, Berlin and Leiden 2013 (Studien aus dem Warburg-Haus, vol. 12 – »Kunst und Wirkmacht / Art and Agency« series), pp. 135–167; cf. also id.: *De verleiding van het vlees. Aanraking en opwinding in de Italiaanse barokscultuur*, in: Caroline van Eck and Stijn Bussels (eds.): *Levende beelden. Kunst werken en kijken*, Leiden 2011, pp. 94–107.

**1** Marco Boschini: *La carta del navegar pitoresco. Edizione critica con la »Breve Istruzione« premessa alle »Ricche Minere della Pittura Veneziana«* (ed. by Anna Pallucchini), Venice and Rome 1966, p. 520: »E pur l'Algardi ha cusì degna strada, / Che ognun dir poderave a bona ciera: / Quel è statua de carne, e no de piera, / O, se piera la xe, la xe incarnada.«

**2** John 1,14.

**3** Aurelius Augustinus: *The Works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21st Century* (ed. by Edmund Hill and John E. Rotelle), Brooklyn 1990, p. 344 (IV.10, sermon 375/C). For a discussion of this theme in Augustine's writings, cf. Andrea Bizzozero: *Il mistero pasquale di Gesù Cristo e l'esistenza credente nei Sermones di Agostino*, Frankfurt am Main 2010, chapter 12.

**4** Sebastian Schütze: *Zur Rekonstruktion historischer Wahrnehmung in den Kulturwissenschaften*, in: id. (ed.): *Kunst und ihre Betrachter in der Frühen Neuzeit. Ansichten, Standpunkte, Perspektiven*, Berlin 2005, p. 10.

**5** On sculpture and touch in early modernity, cf. Peter Dent (ed.): *Sculpture and Touch*, Surrey 2014; James Hall: *Desire and Disgust. Touching Artworks from 1500 to 1800*, in: Robert Maniura and Rupert Shepherd (eds.): *Presence. The Inherence of the Prototype within Images and Other Objects*, Aldershot 2006, pp. 145–160; Geraldine A. Johnson: *Touch, Tactility, and the Reception of Sculpture in Early Modern Italy*, in: Paul Smith and Carolyn Wilde (eds.): *A Companion to Art Theory*, Oxford 2002, pp. 61–74; Hans Körner: *Der fünfte Bruder. Zur Tastwahrnehmung plastischer Bildwerke von der Renaissance bis zum frühen 19. Jahrhundert*, in: *Artibus et historiae* 21/2000, pp. 165–196.

**6** Cf. Giulio Carlo Argan: *La »rettorica« e l'arte barocca*, in: Enrico Castelli (ed.): *Retorica e barocco*, Rome 1955, pp. 9–14.

**7** Cf. Alex Potts: *The Sculptural Imagination. Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist*, New Haven 2000, p. 35.

**8** Maurice Merleau-Ponty: *The Phenomenology of Perception* [1945], London 1962, p. 93.

**9** Maurice Merleau-Ponty: *The Visible and the Invisible* [1964], Evanston 1968, p. 142.

**10** Publius Ovidius Naso: *Le metamorfosi di Ovidio, Ridotte da Gio. Andrea dall'Anguillara, in ottava rima […]* (ed. by Gioseppe Horologgi and Francesco Turchi), Venice 1610, book 10, p. 157r: »Mentre viva gli par tende la mano, / E vuole co'l dito esperienza farne, / E come habbia a sentir, tocca pian piano, / Che non ne vuol far livida la carne. / E se ben non gli par poi corpo humano, / Non però vuol certo giudicio darne.« It then continues: »La bacia, le favolla, e poi si duole, / Che non può trar da lei baci, e parole.«

**11** Ibid., p. 157v: »Bacia l'amata bocca, e tocca il petto, / E gliela par sentir tepida alquanto. / Prova di novo, e con maggior diletto / Men duro, e piu carnal le sente il manto, / E mentre bene anchor creder no'l puote, / Sente, che'l petto il polso alza, e percuote. // Come se preme alcun la cera dura. / L'ammolla con

le dita, e le riscalda, / E per poter donarle ogni figura, / Viene ogn'hor piu trattabile, o men salda, / Cosi premendola ci cangia natura / La statua, e vien più morbida, e più calda, / Ei sta pur stupefatto, e tenta, e prova, / Tanto, che viva al fin la scorge, e trova.«

**12** Publius Ovidius Naso: *Metamorphoses*, London 1916, vol. II, book 10, line 289: »corpus erat! saliunt temptatae pollice venae.« On the role of the sense of touch in the Pygmalion story, cf. George L. Hersey: *Falling in Love with Statues. Artificial Humans from Pygmalion to the Present*, Chicago and London 2009, pp. 95 ff.

**13** John Evelyn: *The Diary of John Evelyn* (ed. by Edmond S. de Beer), Oxford 1955, 6 vols., vol. 2, p. 283.

**14** Ibid., p. 365: »his action of kissing & embracing them is as pleasant as a Comedy«.

**15** Paul Fréart Seigneur de Chantelou: *Journal de voyage du Cavalier Bernin en France* (ed. by Milovan Stanić), Paris 2001, p. 170 (9 September 1665): »Monsieur, quand ces choses tombent à bas, elles se cassent«.

**16** Cf. Niccolò Tribolo, quoted in: Paola Barocchi (ed.): *Benedetto Varchi, Vincenzo Borghini: Pittura e Scultura nel Cinquecento*, Livorno 1998, p. 81: »se fussi un cieco e non avessi mai visto che toccato sé con giudizio suo, e lì trovassi una figura di marmo o di legno o di terra, che confessassi l'è una figura d'uomo, di donna [di] donna, di bambino di bambino«.

**17** Letter from Galileo Galilei to Lodovico Cigoli, 26 June 1612, quoted after Erwin Panofsky: *Galileo as a Critic of the Arts*, The Hague 1954, p. 33: »Ora chi crederà che uno, toccando una statua, si creda che quella sia un uomo vivo? Certo nessuno […] non solamente è sottoposto a tal sentimento il rilevato e il depresso (che sono il rilevo della statua), ma ancora il molle e il duro, il caldo e'l freddo il delicato e l'aspro, il grave e'l leggiero, tutt'indizi dell'inganno della statua.« The English translation is by Panofsky, cf. ibid., pp. 35 f.

**18** Cf. Sebastiano Baldini, quoted in Alessandro Tamburini (ed.): *Poesie de signori academici Disinvolti di Pesaro*, Pesaro 1649, p. 223: »Pur guardo indagator riman convinto, / E gl'inganni la man solo confessa; / A tropo ancor di rimirar non cessa / S'à lo stame vitale è 'l fuso avvinto.«

**19** Cf. Sforza Pallavicino: *Del bene libri quattro*, Rome 1644, pp. 219 f.

**20** Francine Wynn: *The Embodied Chiasmic Relationship of Mother and Infant*, in: *Human Studies* 20/1997, pp. 253–270, p. 259.

**21** Giovanni Andrea Borboni: *Delle statue*, Rome 1661, p. 83: »Ella muove tutte le Madri che la veggono, ancorche non volessero, ad amare teneramente, e accarezzare i loro figliuoli.«

**22** Giovambattista Marino: *L'Adone* (ed. by Marzio Pieri and Luana Salvarani), Lavis 2007, canto 7, 64, p. 179: »Mostra ignudo il bel seno una di queste [ninfe], / e tremanti di latte ha le mammelle […].«

**23** Cf. Hans Körner: *»Wie die Alten sungen…«. Anmerkungen zur Geschichte des Putto*, in: Roland Kanz (ed.): *Das Komische in der Kunst*, Köln 2007, pp. 59–90; Anthony Colantuono: *Titian's Tender Infants. On the Imitation of Venitian Painting in Baroque Rome*, in: *I Tatti Studies* 3/1989, pp. 207–234.

**24** Boschini 1966, p. 712: »Gli Bambini particolarmente sono così vivamente nutriti con il latte, che stillava da' suoi eccellenti pennelli, che sono più che vivi […].«

**25** Luigi Scaramuccia: *Le finezze de pennelli italiani […]*, Pavia 1674, p. 17: »d'animata Carne più tosto si fanno intendere, che di duro sasso«; Letter from Pieter Paul Rubens to François Duquesnoy, 17 April 1640, quoted after Giovanni Pietro Bellori: *Le vite de' pittori, scultori e architetti moderni* (ed. by Evelina

Borea), Turin 1976, p. 302: »'l marmo si sia intenerito in vita«; ibid., p. 299: »venne ad ammollire la durezza del marmo, sembrando essi più tosto di latte che di macigno«.

**26** Filippo Baldinucci: *Notizie de' professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua: Secolo V. dal 1610 al 1670,* Florence 1728, pp. 285 f.: »egli fu per certo un artefice singolarissimo, in quanto appartiene particolarmente alla bella idea, che egli si formò nell'esprimere le forme de' putti, per lo grande studio fatto da quei di Tiziano e dal naturale stesso, ricercando i più teneri sino nelle fascie; osservando minutamente essa tenerezza, non pure nelle forme loro, ma eziandio negli atti, ne' moti e nelle attitudini«. The passage is not fully transcribed in Filippo Baldinucci: *Notizie dei professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua* (ed. by Fernando Ranalli and Paola Barocchi), Florence 1975, 7 vols., vol. 4, p. 677 (here the sentence ends at »sino nelle fascie«). Baldinucci follows closely the argument of Bellori 1976, p. 299.

**27** Francesco Maria Maggio: *Compendioso ragguaglio della vita, morte e miracoli della venerabile Madre D. Orsola Benincasa Napolitana [. . .]*, Milan 1673, p. 88: »Anna andò à fargli carezze, e lo trovò come divenuto di carne, e caldo«; cf. also Christiane Klapisch-Zuber: *Holy Dolls. Play and Piety in Florence in the Quattrocento*, in: Sarah Blake McHam (ed.): *Looking at Italian Renaissance Sculpture*, Cambridge 1998, pp. 111–127.

**28** Cf. Konrad Lorenz: *Die angeborenen Formen möglicher Erfahrung*, in: *Zeitschrift für Tierpsychologie* 5/1943, pp. 274–275.

**29** Cf. Jan Baptist Bedaux: *From Normal to Supranormal. Observations on Realism and Idealism from a Biological Perspective*, in: id. and Brett Cooke (eds.): *Sociobiology and the Arts*, Amsterdam and Atlanta 1998, pp. 99–125.

**30** Ovidius 1610, book 10, p. 166r: »essendo la volontà nostra naturalmente spinta per sempre ad amare, si danno ad amare alcune cose di poco frutto, solamente per proprio loro piacere, come Pitture, Sculture, medaglie, ò simil cose, e le amano cosi caldamente, che vengono le medesime cose, a satisfare al desiderio loro, come se rimanessero satisfatti del desiderio del vero Amore, che deve esser fra l'huomo, e la donna«.

**31** Pallavicino 1644, pp. 456 f.: »le fiamme pestilenti, che sono accese ne' petti giovanili dalle imagine oscene, le quali con obbrobio dell'umana sfacciataggine tal'ora pagansi gran danaro per esser mantici della sopita lascivia: comperandosi come prezioso il desiderio medesimo di peccare«.

**32** For the various ancient variants of the story and related responses in the seventeenth century to the Medici Venus, cf. Stijn Bussels: *Da' più scorretti abusata. The Venus de' Medici and its History of Sexual Responses* , in: Caroline van Eck, Joris van Gastel and Elsje van Kessel (eds.): *The Secret Lives of Artworks. Exploring the Boundaries between Art and Life*, Leiden 2014, pp. 38–55.

**33** Antonio Lupis: *Dispaccio di Mercurio*, Venice 1682, p. 71 (Letter to Sig. Antonio Morrone, Bergamo): »Quella Venere de Medici, il più raro portento, che intagliasse dalle sue lascivie la Grecia, in cui l'Arte con le sue morbidezze mostrossi così presuntuosa in voler insegnare la Natura di potersi impastare l'Humanità trà le selci, e d'inventare un nuovo peccato di carne negl'amorosi amplessi di un sasso.« For the Medici Venus in the seventeenth century, cf. Edward L. Goldberg: *Patterns in Late Medici Art Patronage*, Princeton 1983, pp. 227–251.

**34** Evelyn 1955, vol. 2, p. 264; cf. Hans Körner: *Statuenliebe in St. Peter. Rompilger und Romtouristen vor Guglielmo Della Portas Grabmal für Papst Paul III*, Düsseldorf 1999.

**35** S. Bernardini Senensis: *Opera omnia,* Florence 1950–1965, 9 vols., vol. 6, p. 259: »Novi personam, quae dum contemplabatur humanitem Christi pendentis in cruce (pudet dicere et horrendum est etiam cogitare) sensualiter et turpiter polluebatur et foedabatur.« Translation taken from Beverly Louise Brown: *Between the Sacred and the Profane*, in: id. (ed.): *The Genius of Rome, 1592–1623*, London and New York 2001, p. 284. Here also a more extensive discussion of the problem of the religious nude.

**36** Pietro da Lucca: *Arte del ben pensare e contemplare la passione del nostro signore Iesu Christo […]*, Venice 1535, p. 11v, quoted from the 1527 edition after Robert W. Gaston: *Sacred Erotica. The Classical figura in Religious Painting of the Early Cinquecento*, in: *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 2/1995, pp. 238–264, n. 47: »le donne dovere essere molto caute nel meditare la nudita della carne del Salvatore. Imperoche troppo fortemente figendo la imaginatione in quella, per opera del Demonio facilmente potrebbero incorrere in qualche laido e brutto pensiero de carnalitade: si come all'huomo anchora per la differentia del sesso, simile pericolo accaderebbe se la nudita di Maria vergine, o d'altra Santa martyre con forte imaginatione considerate volesse«.

**37** Cf. Giovan Domenico Ottonelli and Pietro da Cortona: *Trattato della Pittura e Scultura. Uso et Abuso loro, composto da un Theologo e da un Pittore*, Florence 1652, p. 368: »sarà facilmente contaminato da impurità, chi si mostra incauto spettatore di que' brutti oggetti, che muovono efficacemente al peccato«.

**38** Lorenzo Azzolino: *Scelta di poesie* (ed. Pompeo Azzolino), Florence 1836, p. 12; originally in Francesco Baglioni (ed.): *Scelta di poesie Italiane*, Venice 1686, p. 11; quoted after Ottonelli and Cortona 1652, p. 357: »Passa, o Febo, più oltre, e il guardo fisa / Ne' sacri Tempj, e vi contempla meco / O tela colorata, o pietra incisa. / Non rassembrano Ninfe o in fonte o in speco, / Cotanto ignude e morbide e vezzose / L'imagini Latine hanno del Greco?«; cf. Magda Vasillov: *Rhetoric and Fragments of a High Baroque Art Theory*, in: *Marsyas* 20/1979–1980, pp. 17–29, p. 20 (who confuses Lorenzo with Giovanni Azzolini).

**39** Cf. Domenico Bernino: *Vita del Cavalier Gio. Lorenzo Bernino […]*, Rome 1713, pp. 19 f.: »per esser femmina nuda, benche di Sasso, mà di mano del Bernino, poteva offendere l'occhio pudico.«; cf. Joris van Gastel: *Bernini's Metamorphosis. Sculpture, Poetry, and the Embodied Beholder*, in: *Word & Image* 28/2012, pp. 193–205.

**40** Ignatio di Loiola: *Essercitii spirituali*, Rome 1625, p. 8: »Cominci l'Applicatione del Senso della Vista, e s'imagini di vedere le persone, attioni, & altre cose, che possono essere ogetto di questo Sentimento: dopoi applichi l'Udito, il Gusto, l'Odorato, & il Tatto, ciascuno a' suoi proprij ogetti (che se peravventura non vi sono ogetti proprij, e corporali, si proponga egli alcuni ogetti metaforici, e spirituali.) Se però si rappresenta alla Fantasia prima l'ogetto di un Senso, che di un'altro, per essempio prima dell'Odorato, che della Vista, e del Gusto, si fermi in esso (perche alla fine l'ordine sopraposto non è talmente necessario, che non si possa preterire) e cerchi, per quanto si può, di penetrarlo bene.«

**41** Carlo Gregorio Rosignoli: *Notizie memorabili degli Esercizi Spirituali di Sant'Ignazio* [1694], Venice 1713, p. 54: »da questo modo di gustare, e vedere le cose Divine […] ne proviene una certa cognizione come sperimentale, che avanza di tanto la notizia per via di discorso, quanto l'assaggiare i sapori supera il discorrerne«.

**42** Francisco Arias: *Profitto spirituale, nel quale s'insegna fare acquisto delle virtù, e progresso nello spirito*, Venice 1602, 2 vols., vol. 2, , cap. 15, p. 212: »L'appetito del diletto che è nella carne, esce come da una fonte, & si sparge per tutti i sensi; come per cinque fiumi, & con gli occhi, come con certe mani incorporee, tocca tutto quello, che vuole, & quelle cose che con le mani corporali non puote toccare le abbraccia con gli stessi occhi, & le imagini, & le figure delle cose, che riceve co[n] gli occhi le stampa nel cuore e con quelle infia[m]ma tutto il corpo di diletto & in questa guisa tutti i sensi indrizzano le operazioni al diletto, come ad una Regina loro: & così contaminano l'anima, & la fanno carnale«; cf. Ottonelli and Cortona 1652, p. 369.

**43** Cf. Lorenzo Pericolo: *Statuino. An Undercurrent of Anticlassicism in Italian Baroque Art Theory*, in: *Art History* 38/2015, pp. 862–889; Ulrich Heinen: *Rubens zwischen Predigt und Kunst. Der Hochaltar für die Walburgenkirche in Antwerpen*, Weimar 1996, pp. 196 ff., n. 103.

**44** Alfred Gell: *Art and Agency. An Anthropological Theory*, Oxford 1998, p. 43.

**45** Quoted after Robert T. Petersson: *The Art of Ecstasy. Saint Teresa, Bernini and Crashaw*, London 1979, p. 40.